

The management of roadside verges has moved on from the days when they were routinely sprayed with lawn weedkillers, but it is still far short of perfect. Much is now sub-contracted by councils to local farmers and timing is thus governed by the farming calendar. In general, a single cut in late spring and another in late autumn will retain order and floral diversity. Restricting any summer cutting of broad verges to the roadside edge and the inside curve of bends provides good flora over a prolonged period, as many of the species present in the uncut area will flower at a reduced height and later period in the cut area. If the autumn cut is delayed until November, then most Lepidoptera larvae will be off the taller plants and the flowers will have time to set seed, benefiting the continued diversity of wildlife in the verge. Even so, smaller species of plants will continue to struggle against the thick thatch, which is often left smothering the verge after the autumn cut. Is it any wonder that only coarse grasses and tough perennials survive in so many of our verges? Better management of the best verges in an area may need to involve local conservation groups but it is unlikely to be easy to achieve.

#### References

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#### Some records of Lepidoptera from Westmoreland (VC69)

The year 1998 was one of the worst on record in my experience – an experience extending over 60 years. True, I was not able to do much field work – age is catching up on me so that most of my collecting and observations are now restricted to my own small garden in Grange-over-Sands. I operate a m.v. moth trap when conditions (to the human senses) seem likely to be productive. Last year numbers, both of species and individuals, were well down on those of recent years. In spite of this I noted three species of macrolepidoptera that I had never seen in this district before, and believe these may be worth recording.

*Polygonia c-album* (L.) – A fresh specimen was observed nectaring on a *Buddleja* bush in my garden on 31 July. My wife first noticed the specimen and we had it under observation for about five minutes. This species appears to be experiencing one of its phases of expansion of range. I have heard of other specimens having been observed in this district at about the same date.

*Eublemma parva* (Hb.) – A fine, fresh, male specimen was taken in my trap on 4 July. It is a specimen with very pale facies and faint markings and would be var. *pallida* Tutt (*vide* Tutt, J.W. *The British Noctuae and their Varieties* Vol. IV: p.11). There are very few records of this species for northern England. Being a small species, it could be readily overlooked – and to the collector of macroplepidoptera could well be mistaken for a “micro”. So, its apparent scarcity may well be only apparent.

*Lithophane leautieri* ssp. *hesperica* Boursin. A specimen of this was taken in my trap on 2 October. It was one of only two moths in the trap (the other was *Aporophyla nigra* (Haw.)). So far as I know, this is only the second record for *leautieri* in VC69; I understand one was taken in Kendal in October 1996 (W.D. Kydd *pers. comm.*).

While moth numbers in the trap were fewer than usual, social wasps (*Vespula* sp.) were far too numerous, so that sorting the catch was often a hazardous procedure.— NEVILLE L. BIRKETT, Beardwood, Carter Road, Grange-over-Sands LA11 7AG.

### Plant-bugs (Hemiptera) on Woolwich Common, south-east London

I was much surprised to sweep an example of the Bishop's Mitre shield-bug *Aelia acuminata* (L.) (Pentatomidae), from low mixed herbage at the edge of a strip of semi-woodland in the above locality on 19 September 1998. Officially, this grass-feeding species is no rarity; it may be, or may have been, common enough in some other parts of the country, but this is only the second specimen I have met with, and the first was not here.

Another pentatomid, the striking *Eurydema oleracea* (L.) – already recorded from here in this journal (Allen, 1992: 79-80; 1994: 30) – may be mentioned here on account of the plant on which it occurred. The usual host on Woolwich Common is horseradish *Armoracia*, but on 19 May 1999 one was brushed off hoary pepperwort *Cardaria draba*, which grew in thick masses at the spot. I have no doubt that this is a foodplant; there was no *Armoracia* nearby and in fact it had scarcely begun to appear above ground.

On the same day an example of *Rhopalus subrufus* (Gmel.) (Rhopalidae) was swept from a variety of low plants. Its most usual host, *Hypericum*, was nowhere near. This too is regarded as a common bug, but certainly cannot be so now in the London area, where I had never before seen it. Close by, the coreid *Coriomeris denticulatus* (Scop.) was on its chief foodplant *Medicago lupulina*, as rather often in previous years.

Also in evidence was the curious small hopper *Asiraca clavicornis* (F.) (Delphacidae). This grass-feeder used to be considered a very local rarity, but has proved to be far from uncommon in my district.— A.A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.